

Akilah Hughes:

Hello, and welcome to the Black Euphoria podcast. I'm your host, Akilah Hughes. Like many very cool and very Black projects, our show came together after we saw Black Panther back in 2018 and were inspired by the Afrofuturism and hope that the film inspired. These episodes are a collection of interviews with Black creatives, Black artists, Black innovators, Black visionaries, and other amazing Black people who are making our world a little more like Wakanda every day. Sound good? Cool, let's get into it.

My first guest is the inimitable April Reign. You may know her from her Twitter handle, ReignofApril, where she effortlessly created viral hashtags including #OscarsSoWhite, Here's that conversation.

I think it was partially me, because it did say that my wifi, my connection wasn't great, but it should be. Perfect, all right. Well, we love to start with our technical difficulties. All right, well April Reign, thank you so, so much for being here, it's such an honor to speak to you anytime, but especially when we have such an exciting film coming out, the sequel to Black Panther, Wakanda Forever, can't wait. So yeah, tell us a little bit about yourself. Who are you? How would our audience know you? And what are you up to these days?

April Reign:

I hate this question, thank you so much, Akilah.

Akilah Hughes:

I know.

April Reign:

I actually really hate talking about myself. I am officially the creator of #OscarsSoWhite, I am a Senior Advisor for Gauge on issues of media in entertainment. Let's see, I practiced law for about 15 years, but most of all, most importantly I'm a Black woman and a mother of two amazing kids.

Akilah Hughes:

Yes, very cool. Well, we love to have you, and very cool bio. So I guess we'll first start talking about Wakanda, because I think that as the movie is coming out, I'm not sure when this will be released, so we may have just had the premieres and everything, we may be right before it, but we're all looking forward to it. So what was your favorite part of Wakanda when you saw it on screen, for the first time, what did it elicit in you?

April Reign:

Hope and possibility are the two things. The lack of colonization, us being our full authentic selves in a way that at least I had never seen before. So I think about in Black Panther, when they broke through the trees and you get to see what it could be, was incredibly special.

Akilah Hughes:

Yeah, and it definitely seems like something that I just don't think in media Black people have gotten to escape reality enough in that way, where it's like, oh wow, imagine if there's a sovereign Black nation that has all of this power, and is not at any point being attacked militaristically, or ideologically, or for

resources, or whatever. You're right, it definitely was a rare experience and also just such a beautiful one.

So the audience at home might not know this, but you and I saw Black Panther for the first time at the same venue, which I don't think we knew at the same time, but it was for the Twitter Blackbirds screening, they had the whole cast there. So yeah, can you talk a little bit about your involvement? Because I know that you, maybe not for that specific screening, but overall #OscarsSoWhite had happened, and you are definitely a person who impacted the way film rolled out from then on out. So yeah, can you talk a little bit about that journey?

April Reign:

Yeah, thank you for that. For that screening too, #OscarsSoWhite, the hashtag, happened on Twitter, and I am very open in saying it could not have happened on any other social media platform. Facebook, they would've just been finding out about it, and Instagram is a much more visual medium, and this was just a hashtag. So it happened on Twitter, and I started to cultivate a relationship with the Twitter Blackbirds starting really in 20, even before that, because #OscarsSoWhite was not my first viral hashtag, it would not be my last.

So they reached out and said, "We are doing simultaneous screenings of Black Panther all over the country and we would like you to help curate the audiences." So basically I got to invite all of my friends from all over the country to come and see what ended up being a \$1.4 billion film that we were all really looking forward to, and they all got to say that they had a sneak peek before it dropped. So in Boston and LA and Atlanta and in New York, where we were and where the cast was, we just had a wonderful, wonderful opportunity to be in community, and again, to experience that possibility and that potential of Wakanda itself, in addition to all of the actors, many of whom were new or newer to us, and none of whom we had ever seen in this light before.

Akilah Hughes:

Absolutely, that's a really great point. You say you got to invite your friends to what ended up being such a massive screening, maybe you could say for the first time they saw it, because I know I saw it in theaters three times. How many times were you able to see it in theaters? If you got to see it more than once.

April Reign:

Oh man, I lost count, at least seven in theater, and a very good friend of mine is Fred Joseph, who started the #BlackPantherChallenge, and so he was going, and so if he was in a specific state I'm like, yeah, I'm down, whatever. I get to see it again? Absolutely. And then I still, and I don't know how this plays into ratings or whatever, but when I'm on a plane and there isn't something I want to watch, or if I plan on working or sleeping, I'll still put Black Panther on. Just like, don't ever take Black Panther out of the catalog for this flight, I want it there all the time. So I'm still, even four years later, trying to be down for the cause.

Akilah Hughes:

Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. So you mentioned that before this viral hashtag, and it wasn't your first, you were a lawyer for many years, so did that education and experience give you any insight into, I don't know, why these all white spaces or mostly white spaces don't include people of color, and if it's by design, if it's a systemic issue? I just think that a lot of what #OscarsSoWhite did was shine a light on an

industry that has gotten away with not having any diversity or representation, and the legal field is often overwhelmingly white, so did you see any parallels there for you?

April Reign:

Absolutely. And I will also say, I started #OscarsSoWhite, but so many people have taken this so white moniker and used it in other industries. So there is a #JournalismSoWhite, there is an #EducationSoWhite, there is a #BrooklynSoWhite, because unfortunately there are way too many spaces, every single industry over indexes for white folks, especially white men. So I started out at a smallish private firm, and I knew after two or three years that I was just never going to make partner. I think there may be two or three Black partners in the entire firm, and they had to bust their ass for years and years and years, and you can tell that they were more qualified. And so they would put them on the most important cases, but still not give them their just do.

And so yes, I absolutely saw the same kind of thing happening in the legal field, and I left. I stopped practicing at that firm, and eventually after #OscarsSoWhite I stopped practicing altogether, because it wasn't worth the microaggressions and the macroaggressions. And we see so many times Black folks leaving academia because they know that they're never going to make tenure, they're never going to become a full professor, or it's going to take everything that they have, and then what do you have left to actually give to your students? And it is unfortunate that especially in this country, but in other countries as well, I think that more than anything it's fear. And we hear that in the talking points of far right conservatives all the time, "They're coming to take your guns."

Akilah Hughes:

Exactly.

April Reign:

Or, "They're coming to take your jobs," and it's like, but you don't want to work those jobs. We hear that a lot when we're talking about issues of immigration, "Well, you don't want to work those menial jobs that are supposedly the only ones left for people who are migrating to this country, so what are you concerned about?" And yet you would still complain if those jobs weren't being done. So if you don't want to work in the fields and make sure that we have fresh produce, but if you go and there's no arugula at Home Foods, then you're complaining about it. It's like, you got to make up your mind.

Akilah Hughes:

Exactly, you have to figure out where you stand. And also just be honest. If the aversion to diversity and other cultures isn't just that they're taking the jobs, because that can't be, like you said, can't possibly be the truth. No one is mad that their application got thrown out for those jobs, those jobs are available, frankly, then the truth is you just don't like diversity, and ask yourself why, interrogate those questions. I think that that's a really important point.

So obviously we know #OscarsSoWhite I think not only spawned all these other hashtags, like you were mentioning, but it also changed your career and career path and opened a huge door for you. So can you talk a little bit about where you have been able to be effective? We know that you have worked with Pixar, which is very cool. So you talk a little bit about how there are studios that are now aware of the issue of just insensitivity, or lack of representation, or poor representation, that sort of thing, what it's like to work alongside people who are actually trying to change those inconsistencies and inequities in their industries.

April Reign:

It's been a really interesting journey. I want to say that the newer the network or studio is, the more amenable they are to having these conversations. And that, in my mind, is because many of the older, more established studios are still run by older white men who are resistant to change, who think Black Panther was a fluke \$1.4 billion.

Akilah Hughes:

Yeah, that's a pretty big fluke.

April Reign:

Right, and there's so much data, actual evidence that says how much Black folks over index in entertainment. We know that the fastest growing demographic of moviegoers is the Latino population, and yet we are just now getting Namor in Wakanda Forever as this mestizo superhero, when we should have had Mexican American and Columbia American and Guatemala American, or just Guatemala superheroes for years and years and years.

So this work has been very, very rewarding, it's also difficult because everyone is resistant to change. And so for me it is constantly asking the question, why not? You're going to have a new movie with four leads, why isn't one of them visibly disabled? Why isn't one of them openly queer? Because what does that change to the movie? Probably very little to nothing with respect to the storyline, but think about how, and of course you have to put this in terms of bottom line, because green is the only color that truly matters to Hollywood.

Akilah Hughes:

Yeah, yeah, true.

April Reign:

So think of the additional impact this movie could have, and the additional money that you could make because more people are going to see it because more people feel like they see themselves in a character from a traditionally underrepresented community. So it's just bringing folks into the light, slowly but surely, sometimes kicking and screaming, to say, "Look how much better this could be if you made this small change." And I was doing a screening for a film the other night and they said, "When we talk about marginalized communities, we don't necessarily need to bang you on the head with the fact, this is a lesbian, and let's find out her whole origin story, and when she invited her community to come in." No, just say, you know what, she's got a girlfriend that she's going to go home to once she finished saving the world, that's all you need to say.

Akilah Hughes:

Exactly.

April Reign:

And it's very clear who she is, but that's important to the queer community, but that also shouldn't turn folks off. If you think about, for example, the example I always use is the X-Men franchise. Well, you've got Professor Xavier in a wheelchair, he uses a wheelchair 100% of the time, and yet nobody thinks about that, nobody says, "Oh, this is a disabled," whatever, no, it's just one part of who he is, and yet

people who use a wheelchair can say, look at that, that's a superhero, and he moves in the world the same way that I do.

Akilah Hughes:

Yes, and I think that that's a really important point, that probably people from marginalized communities have thought about quite a bit, is that when we do get representation, or historically when we were able to see ourselves represented on screen, there's so much time and effort put into giving this painful backstory, this oppressive backstory. I was listening to President Obama on a podcast recently and he was like, "The left wing can be just a little bit of a buzzkill," that was the word that the former president used, and I respect him so much, but I push back because I think that having an identity is not a buzzkill.

It is the fact, though, that we have been relegated to stories that only make our identities the plot point, versus the fact that people have full interior lives. I obviously have queer friends, disabled friends, friends who are immigrants, friends who are DACA recipients, that is not most of what we're talking about all the time, but we are never given that full human experience on screen.

And so I think, to your point, what was so refreshing about Wakanda was that them being in Africa and being African was not seen as some form of plight or a setback for them, in fact, it was their superpower, and we were able to have smarter conversations in the film and even around the film because of it. One thing that we've spoken about on this podcast a little bit is Killmonger and how a lot of people are, he made some good points. I do think that he's an interesting super villain insofar as he represents a full person. Okay, so maybe his demands are a bit extreme, but is he all the way wrong? No, and I think that that's just something that made the film even that much more special.

Can I ask you, where were you on comic books before you saw Black Panther, or comic book films? Did you care? Were you a fan?

April Reign:

I am an MCU fan, I will be very transparent and say I was not a huge comic book fan. Not that I didn't like them, but I just wasn't into them, and so I read them very rarely. However, I have learned relatively recently that my son is a huge Static Shock fan. He just got a Static Shock tattoo, he's 23. And so that was the only superhero when he was growing up, it was on TV and stuff, and I did not realize how much of an impact those 30 minute episodes had for him. And clearly they were not enough, and ended way too early, and what have you. But he said that was the first superhero that he knew, because this was way before Black Panther, that was the first superhero he knew that looked like him, and so that's really wonderful. So I had no idea that sitting him in front of the TV so I can wash the dishes, or whatever, was having this lasting impact on him.

And now we have Miles Morales, and so now I can go back, and what's even more amazing is that I have friends, Eve Ewing and Roxanne Gay and Ta-Nehisi Coates, and so people that I know, people who I revere, are people of color, which I think is incredibly important because I'm always talking about who is telling the story and whose story is being told. And so God bless Stanley, and all the rest of them, but having Black folks tell Black stories as graphic novels I think is incredibly important, and means a lot not only to fans of the comics, but also potential writers, because not everybody wants to write the great American novels, some folks want to deal with the comic books, and now you've got Black posts that you can say, "Oh, well if Roxanne Gay can do it, I can do it too," and isn't that wonderful that again we're opening up this world, God bless Wakanda, for always opening up worlds, but opening up this world for potential writers and even animators down the line.

Akilah Hughes:

Yeah, absolutely. So this podcast is a little bit about how people are making Wakanda feel real, and I think what's exciting about, I followed you on Twitter before that became a viral hashtag, I still follow you today, I think that you have just really great insights, so if you're listening, April Reign, R-E-I-G-N, is that? Yes, so that's her name, but also her Twitter handle. I think that we can talk about these positions of power that Black people are starting to find, I think that that is very new in our culture, and something that seems so innate in Wakanda is that there is no fight for Black people to have anything. It's a very equitable society, it has been built around the idea that there is abundance and when we work together we can go further.

So have you seen, since you've changed career paths, you are now a go-to for a lot of these movie houses in just getting a sense of what is inclusive and appropriate and joyful for Black people, have you also encountered other Black people who are now getting power in these spaces, and do you all have conversations about what this means and what the future looks like for us?

April Reign:

Absolutely. I mean, the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, the folks who run the Oscars, made some, what I want to say are surface changes to their membership, and everything else. I liken it to window dressing on a condemned house, it's like, yes, it looks great, and you can get the headline, but if you read a little deeper you realize that those loopholes you can drive a truck through. But what does excite me is that individual filmmakers, actors, and others are creating their own production houses. So we talked about Michael B. Jordan, he has Outlier Society Productions, which used to be run by Alana Mayo, who is now the president of Orion Films, and so she just put out the Till movie. So what a wonderful legacy.

And you think about Ava DuVernay, obviously, not just for the force that she is, but also because every single showrunner and director on Queen Sugar, after five or six seasons now, have been women.

Akilah Hughes:

Yes.

April Reign:

So not too long ago in Los Angeles she had a huge panel discussion with many of those women directors who were talking about the fact that they had directed feature films, like two hour films, but could not get a 30 minute episode on television. People don't realize that even though you've got the skills, the experience does not necessarily translate as easily.

And so what excites me most is having conversations with folks in the entertainment industry about how they are no longer waiting for a seat at the table, but creating their own mansion and putting their table in it. And that goes down the line, not just filmmakers, but folks behind the camera too, which is incredibly important. I think that streaming services has helped, just because if there's a new streaming service and it wants original content, well somebody's got to write it, and so having the need for more people from traditionally underrepresented communities as screenwriters is important, and opening that door up for potential showrunners and directors. So that's what excites me, that soup to nuts, all the way through the process. I think people who have not previously been able to get opportunities are now having them slowly but surely, we obviously have a lot more work to do, but that part seems better than it did before #OscarsSoWhite.

Akilah Hughes:

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I keep saying absolutely, but it feels very evident, and it also feels like, even after the summer of 2020, where there were these uprisings, people were having, I think across the country for a lot of people, specifically white people, for the first time having real conversations about why their friend groups are so white, and why they live in neighborhoods where they never see Black people, and where inequalities clearly must be present, but they've been able to ignore it. There's also that exciting momentum of the fact that a lot of companies said that they were going to make change, put Black people in positions of power, and so we're only now even seeing the beginning of what that change looks like and what's possible there.

One person who's obviously very involved in the Black Panther franchise is Ryan Coogler, we love Coog, shout out to Coog, if he was available for the pub, we would also love to have him in this conversation. He's somebody who also had a nontraditional background, made a switch to film, is a MacArthur genius, has probably one of, I think arguably, and this is maybe debatable, but arguably the strongest first three film releases that he directed of almost any director alive, maybe Martin Scorsese could compete, but I'm like depends, was Boxcar Bertha in the top three? I don't know how early we're looking.

But can you talk a little bit about that? Because I know you've obviously spoken with him, you've met him before, you exist in that world, but what does he represent too for entertainment as this outlier, a person who never code switches in interviews, who is not online making waves, but is absolutely affecting culture in such a huge way, does that show you another path for Black artists and Black people to find success in non-traditional ways?

April Reign:

I hope so. I am such a huge fan of both him as a person and his work, and he just puts his head down and does his thing and then goes home to his wife and kids, and that's it, and that's beautiful. And so that's just one thing, there's nothing wrong with being out in the streets and doing all of the things, but it just speaks to his undeniable talent. I also want to say that I think that Michael B. Jordan is the muse for Ryan Coogler the way that Leo DiCaprio is the muse for Scorsese, there's just something about that, with Fruitvale Station, and with Creed, and with Black Panther, there's just something about the way that Ryan is able to pull something more out of MBJ than I don't know that I've seen anybody else do.

And Ryan keeps the door open for other Black folks specifically to do their things. So you look at, I saw him, I think as Creed II was filming, and I was like, "What are we feeling about Stephen Caple?" He was like, "No, that's my boy, he's got it, it's going to be great." And then I look and there's another Coogler name that is not Ryan for Creed III and I was like, yeah. So he's doing the thing, and Ryan understands the importance of authenticity. And I am a Black Panther film super fan, so I'm watching all these interviews, and how he traveled, and which country made sense, and all of the people that he brought in, one of the wonderful things that I find about him is that he knows what he doesn't know, and is very open to saying, "I need help on this. Who is the expert? Tell me what I need to know to make this better. I'm not going to assume that I know the different tribes in Africa and how that makes sense."

And I think that that collaboration makes for better intellectual property, because he is making, he's going both wide and deep in all of these projects to make them better. I think about, I know we're talking about Black Panther, but I think about in Creed, where Michael is running down the street, and you've got all the guys on the three wheelers, that is Philly culture, and I don't know that every director would've gone there, would have done that, and yet it meant so much to folks who are from Philly, and Black folks in general who understand that that is so much a part of who we are.

Akilah Hughes:

Yeah, yeah, and that authenticity I think is what really anyone and everyone is demanding of Hollywood. It's not that we're asking for, obviously this is a fantastical story, and there are superpowers, but really what we're just hoping for is can we be represented in a way that can make us proud, can make us feel seen. Something that's fun about Black Panther as just an idea of a film is that I think that the experience of Ryan Coogler getting an opportunity to make a big box office hit and landing that plane, right? That's a big, tall order, and boy did he exceed expectations, yes.

April Reign:

Let's give credit to Nate Moore, that would not have happened had you not had a Black person at his level to say, "Yes, give Ryan whatever he needs." And I'm sure that a lot of that happened with Wakanda Forever as well, also because we had COVID. And so what do you do with the delays, and all of that, and with the loss of Chad, with Chadwick Boseman passing away, and how do you honor him while still remembering that this is going to be part of the MCU, and so Ryan has to be forward thinking enough to make sure that his story interlocks with everything else that is going on with Thor, and Loki and Captain America.

Akilah Hughes:

Exactly, yeah exactly, they have a whole plan.

April Reign:

So that it all makes sense. And yes, we have many multiverses, and all of that, but the story has to not just make sense while we're sitting there in the theater for this film, but with everything else that's going on, and that's no small feat.

Akilah Hughes:

Yeah, not at all, so I appreciate you making that point because yes, there is a long line of people who had to achieve a lot to even open that door in the first place. But with the film it's like there were all of these expectations, and I think Black people are often underestimated, and often made to feel like if they succeed it is going to have to be against all odds, and there's a good chance that they won't succeed. So can you talk a little bit about the pride that maybe you feel watching not only a movie like that be so excellent, a great film goer experience, but also just a huge ass money maker. What does it feel like? I'm sure we all have the adjectives we could come up with, but for you in particular from this journey of holding, I think, entertainment accountable, and then watching what happens when Black people are given the space to be great, is it just the most vindicating experience?

April Reign:

I am the most petty person that you'll ever meet, and I don't take credit for that. I watched Box Office Mojo every week, I was checking the numbers as if I had stake in the film, like I had three points in it or something, which I do not, and did not. So yes, vindicated in the sense that we always knew. We use that phrase so much in the Black community, "So and so had BLM written on his trailer home, and we find out he did it himself for the insurance," and it's like, Black people knew that. We're not going around doing that too.

Akilah Hughes:

Exactly, exactly, Black women tried to tell you.

April Reign:

Exactly, we've been there. And so with this it was like, just give us the damn baton and let us run, because we are ready, because we have been ready for all this time, just to show you and show the world what we can do. And it's not even that so much, because we don't want to upset our white folks. This isn't to prove something to them, it was for our culture, it was this is what we can be and how we can see ourselves when we are given the freedom and space to do that. And again, God bless Nate Moore for allowing that to happen.

Akilah Hughes:

Yeah.

April Reign:

So I think that's it, that something on this scale could be achieved, and not just at the box office, but what it meant for kids to see themselves, to see this amazing superhero on screen, what it meant for aspiring costume designers, and hair and makeup people, and production designers, because they were all winning awards, Ruth Carter and Hannah Beachler and so many others. So all the way down the line, it wasn't just about the actors on the screen, it was about everything that it took to make this special and monumental in a way that we had never seen before and may never see again.

I hope that Marvel puts everything behind Wakanda Forever and doesn't say, okay, well they did it once, they don't need any help, they got it. We still need the same type of marketing and promotional support that we had in the first one, because the first one was new, so everybody was curious about what it would be. The second one is different, and we've lost Chad, and it's a different story, and so I think this one needs even a stronger touch, and so I'm interested to see what happened. I said on Twitter the other day, "Why don't we have Black Panther Halloween costumes?"

Akilah Hughes:

It's time, right, we're ready.

April Reign:

Right, the film comes out two weeks after Halloween and you're building it up, so think of all of the Latino kids who would love to be Namor, in addition to Shuri, and whomever is in the Black Panther suit this time around, all of that. So what I feel is an immense sense of pride, that if what I said back in 2015 made any difference, opened any door, that Ryan Coogler and his team, and everyone else involved with Black Panther, blew that door off the hinges and said, "We're not even closing it anymore, that's no longer an option. We are here, and we are going to make sure we get as many of our people through that door behind us."

Akilah Hughes:

Yes, yes. This has made me very nostalgic, I loved seeing Black Panther in theaters, and I think that after 2020 a lot of times things can feel like things are just getting worse and worse, and to what end? But something else that happened in 2018 that we didn't actually get to experience until 2019, unless you were there, was Beyonce doing homecoming and headlining at Coachella, and so I think that we had so much just Black excellence in 2018. What do you hope for in this new Wakanda Forever movie, and

what do you hope for Black people in the future? Like if this is what we were able to achieve four years ago now, what's possible for us in the future?

April Reign:

I didn't realize those were the same year, what a year that was. Just more progress. And it's hard to know because before seeing Black Panther, my brain could not have imagined something as amazing as I still think it is. I will watch End Game and Infinity Wars and be pissed that Captain America's like, "Oh yeah, I think I got something, let's go to Wakanda to figure things out," I'm like, "No, do not bring him to Wakanda with all of them weird animals and all that."

Akilah Hughes:

Yeah, we don't need all that.

April Reign:

Yeah, I just want more, and I think that we all need to be bold enough to require more, not just ask for more, but require more. And when I say all of us, I'm talking about consumers, because we have so much power in the dollar. As I mentioned, we over index with respect to entertainment, I think that we are much more savvy as consumers now than we were five years ago about what's going on. We stay for the credits, not only to see that last bonus scene in Marvel films, but also to find out who was the production designer? Those costumes were amazing, whose music is that? All of that stuff is important, and that goes toward authenticity, and so I want to see even more of that.

For Wakanda Forever, I don't know exactly what to expect, there's so many theories. I just want a good story. I know based on who Ryan is and who the cast is that it is going to be a beautiful tribute to Chad, who deserves everything, and I want to see the same Wakanda that gave me such hope in what things could be if they are untouched by white hands, by colonizers, so I'm excited about that. The fact that, as has been said by Kevin Feige, Shuri is the smartest person in the MCU, so I want to see more of that, I want to see her brilliance on screen. We now know that we're going to have Ironheart, and so I'm excited to see her for the very first time. I think about Angela Bassett saying, "I've lost everyone," and so of course there are theories about what that means, and where's Shuri? And all the rest of that, for how she has to take over, and what that means as a Black woman to carry that burden that we have so much.

Akilah Hughes:

All the time, yes.

April Reign:

Also very interested in Namor. I know he's going to be the bad guy, or whatever, but what that means to the Latino or LatinX or Hispanic community, having them on screen, and having that moment for them, and then where that can go for that community, and how we can rally around and help them in any way. We can say, you know what, they also deserve all of the things, and so let's figure out how we can work together to make those things happen. And let's not even start about the Afro-Latino thing, and Miles Morales, there's so much out there, there's so much.

Akilah Hughes:

Absolutely. And a theme of what you're saying is this idea of abundance, that there is more, and we should demand it. And also, I can't wait until there is a world where there are so many choices. That's my hardest part of my day, is not like, okay, well there's one movie, and it will be excellent, and lucky us, but wow, everywhere we look there are options, and there is opportunity, and there is prosperity, I think that that is something that in the world we live in, really straight white people get, as a gift on the planet, is you could be anything, you can see anything, the sky is the limit, and I just think that we all want to see that.

So yeah, this has been such a great conversation, I really appreciate you taking the time, again, just to talk through not only your journey and where you're headed, and how you have had impacts starting back in 2015, but even before that, and where you're headed in the future, but also just expressing joy about Wakanda with another Black woman is so exciting. I love it. Every time I do one of these episodes I get more excited to see the film, and so thank you for inspiring that in me, and surely all of the people who are listening.

April Reign:

Oh, thank you so much for having me. This is wonderful, you can tell, I get giddy. Anything Black Panther related, I become like a 12 year old child again. And as you ask, I've lost count of the number of times that I saw the film, the first film, on my TV, on my phone, it's always there. The music, the score, is my writing music. I mean Ludwig, he got, oh my God, how does he do that?

Akilah Hughes:

He went in, he went in.

April Reign:

Yes, and so when I need to write, that is what I pull out. Well it's that and the score too If Beale Street Could Talk, and both of those have been amazing for me through the year.

Akilah Hughes:

Is that Nicholas Britell?

April Reign:

Yes.

Akilah Hughes:

I think so, yes, of course, Succession theme.

April Reign:

That's right, of Succession theme fame. Oh my goodness, yes, they're both brilliant. And so I love it because of the possibility that it gives us, and shows us as royalty in ways that we haven't before, because so often if there's royalty involved they're not actually us, it doesn't look like us, or something super negative had to happen for us to get to that point. And here it's no, this is who we've always been, and I think that's something that so many of us clinging to, because we don't get that as much, or at all.

And I also think about children all the time, what it means for them to have a Black president in this country, and to have a Black superhero, and now to have a Black vice president, what that means for

them in instilling confidence in who they can be, because this is now the bar. Yeah, the bar is you can be president of the United States if you want to, you can be a superhero if you want to, or you can be an amazing engineer who makes fun of her older brother, all of those things are available to you because if you can't see it, you can't be it.

Akilah Hughes:

Yeah, that is a great message to end on. It is about that sight, it is about what we can see, what is possible for us, and I'm so proud that we are, I'm just happy that we are alive in a time where we can see a little bit of progress in that arena. April Reign, thank you so much for being here, it really is just such a pleasure, and yeah, I cannot wait to see the next one, hopefully we'll get to have you back to talk about it after it comes out.

April Reign:

I would love to, thank you so much.

Akilah Hughes:

Thank you for listening. For more info on April and what she's up to, give her a follow on Twitter @ReignofApril.